

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)	
)	
2002 Biennial Review of FCC)	
Telecommunications Regulations)	CG Docket 02-311
)	

Comments of I. King Jordan, President, Gallaudet University

The mission of Gallaudet University is to serve as a comprehensive, multipurpose institution of higher education for deaf and hard of hearing citizens of the United States and of the world.

As President of Gallaudet University, and as a deaf person, I very much appreciate the strides in communication access that have taken place over the past 15 years. Many of the advances toward communication equity for deaf and hard of hearing people have been due to the popularity of visual methods of communication, such as e-mail, interactive pagers, instant messaging, the Web, and broadband video communication. But many others, such as relay services, hearing aid compatibility, closed captioning, and access to digital wireless phones via TTY, were the result of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) implementation of Congressional mandates. As the FCC itself has recognized on numerous occasions, these laws were needed because market forces have never been able to propel access in these areas.

Telecommunications access continues to be of critical importance to our livelihoods, our safety and security, and our participation as equals in society. For example, absent the rules on telecommunications relay services (Part 64), we would cease to have the ability to make phone calls to family, friends, employers, governmental agencies and others who rely on voice telecommunications. Without the inductive coupling requirements of Part 68, those of us who use hearing aids could soon find it difficult to use any phone. The tenuous ability to use TTYs with wireless phones, implemented in Part 20 only a few weeks ago, would also disappear. And finally, the telecommunications access protections promised under Section 255 of the Communications Act would never be realized. The effect of removing or weakening any of these rules will be felt in our employment, our ability to participate in our communities, and in our ability to secure information and emergency services in times of crisis.

The FCC has, I believe, been diligent and fair in implementing legislation aimed at closing the numerous gaps in accessibility in our society, particularly in the area of access to voice communications. As someone who has benefited tremendously from these rules

and who has great concern for the future of Gallaudet students and alumni, I strongly urge the FCC to retain the accessibility rules on TRS, hearing aid compatibility, equipment accessibility, and access to E-9-1-1 services over wireless telephones.

Thank you for your efforts to provide communication accessibility in our country.

Respectfully Submitted

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